

**RESOLUTION
OF
BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF PRAIRIE STATE LEGAL SERVICES, INC.**

**In Support of Enhanced Private Attorney Involvement
with LSC-Funded Programs**

Whereas, the Legal Services Corporation and the programs it funds, including Prairie State Legal Services, have long recognized that the overarching values of private attorney involvement to LSC-funded programs are increased access, increased human and capital resources, and increased *pro bono* commitment; and

Whereas, at its April 2007 meeting, the Board of Directors of the Legal Services Corporation adopted Resolution 2007-003 supporting and encouraging private attorney involvement and urging governing boards of LSC-funded programs to collaborate with other organizations to effectively engage lawyers in *pro bono* representation and other services that benefit low-income persons; and

Whereas, the LSC Board of Directors resolution builds upon the following national LSC initiatives:

- The October 2005 LSC report, *Documenting the Justice Gap in America: The Current Unmet Civil Legal Needs of Low-Income Americans*, which found that 50 percent of the potential clients requesting assistance from an LSC grantee were turned away for lack of resources on the part of the program;
- The *LSC Strategic Directions 2006-2010*, which calls upon LSC to increase public awareness of and support for legal services to low-income persons in order to respond appropriately to more of their legal needs;
- The *LSC Performance Criteria*, which consider, in evaluating a program's legal representation and other activities intended to benefit the low-income population in its service area, whether that program effectively integrates private attorneys into its work in order to supplement the amount and effectiveness of its representation and other services;
- The Provision for the Delivery of Legal Services Committee of the LSC Board of Directors 2006 meetings, which highlighted the potential, opportunities and challenges of private attorney involvement and determined ways in which this critical resource can be used more effectively by LSC-funded programs as a means to help close the justice gap;

- The unanimous adoption in January 2007 by LSC Board of Directors of a strategic work plan entitled *Action Plan for Private Attorney Involvement: Help Close the Justice Gap, Unleash the Power of Pro Bono*, which highlights the benefits of engaging private attorneys to help represent clients of LSC-funded programs and describes ways in which the LSC Board and staff will work to expand private attorney involvement.
- The American Bar Association's Model Rule 6.1 and similar state bar rules note the professional responsibility of every lawyer to provide *pro bono* legal assistance to persons of limited means;

Whereas, the Illinois Supreme Court has recognized the vital role that private attorneys must play in meeting the legal needs of low-income Illinoisans, and to this end the Court has adopted Rule 756(f) which requires the mandatory reporting of pro bono legal services rendered by every Illinois attorney;

Whereas, the Lawyers Trust Fund has recognized the need for greater coordination of the role of legal services programs in facilitating the performance of pro bono work by private attorneys, and to this end the Lawyers Trust Fund, in conjunction with other partners in the Illinois equal justice community, sponsored a Pro Bono Summit in June 2007, at which representatives of the private bar, legal services programs, the judiciary, and others came together to develop strategies to enhance the provision of pro bono services;

Whereas, the **LEGAL AID SAFETY NET: A Report on the Legal Needs of Low-Income Illinoisans**, published in February 2005, found that low-income households had legal assistance for only one out of every six (16.4%) legal problems they encountered in 2003; and that volunteer attorneys were responsible for 11.1% (11,506) of all cases handled by legal aid programs in 2003, but that lawyers based in Cook County handled the overwhelming majority of these pro bono cases (90.1%).

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved that the Board of Directors of **Prairie State Legal Services**, in an effort to help close the justice gap in **Illinois**, supports and encourages private attorney involvement with **Prairie State Legal Services** and will endeavor to:

- Collaborate with other organizations and entities in **Illinois** to develop and facilitate educational efforts that demonstrate the extent of the unmet civil legal need and encourage collective responsibility within **Illinois** by both public and private entities to help meet this unmet civil legal need;
- Collaborate with other organizations and entities in **Illinois** to develop effective strategies for engaging lawyers in *pro bono* representation and other services that benefit low-income persons;

- Consider including in that collaboration organizations and entities such as the Illinois State Bar Association, Illinois Coalition for Equal Justice, Lawyers Trust Fund, Illinois Bar Foundation, Northern Illinois University College of Law, Illinois Supreme Court, and other appropriate organizations; and
- Develop strategies that encourage *pro bono*, including creative recruitment methods and delivery models, attorney practice and continuing legal education rules, and training, mentoring, support, and recognition of volunteers.

Be it Further Resolved that the Board of Directors of **Prairie State Legal Services** will promote, support and encourage private attorney involvement initiatives by publicizing and recognizing private attorney involvement in the work of **Prairie State Legal Services** and by collaborating with national, state and local organizations to create opportunities for such publicity and recognition.

Adopted by the Board of Directors of Prairie State Legal Services on September 8, 2007.

Board Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of stylized, overlapping loops and a long, sweeping tail that extends downwards and to the right. The signature is positioned above a horizontal line.